Method and apparatus for the modular display of soap and soap products

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

This invention is related to a method and system for displaying soap articles.

Background

There is a need for a method and system for soap displaying products where a variety of relatively small articles may be displayed in a pleasant and efficient manner. This need is particularly present for applications such as grocery stores, or drug stores where shelf space may be limited, or where the display and display maintenance of relatively small items is cumbersome or difficult.

In grocery applications, relatively small articles such as packaged soap articles may be assigned narrow shelf space, where it may be difficult for a consumer to locate a desired item. The items are typically stacked several articles high in a display row, so that it is difficult to keep the row neatly arranged.

The prior art includes wire baskets, wire display racks such as shown in online catalogs for Alpha Store Fixtures at http://www.storefixtures2000.com, and clip strips such as shown in http://www.avdm.com/Fixtures-Hardware.html.

There is a need for an attractive display system and method for a soap product that may be provided in a variety of colors or formulations, so that a customer can easily choose a desired soap article.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

In one embodiment of the current invention, a wire rack with multiple display modules is provided. Each display module typically can store and display a plurality of prepackaged soap articles.

In one embodiment, each display module is about 9 to 12 inches tall holds six to eight packages of soap. There may be from one to six modules in a stack or column which is typically affixed to a display shelf, wall, or other support surface. Each module has a containment frame for containing any articles stacked above the first article and has a lip which restricts the removal of the bottom article from the display module. The lip requires the customer to slightly tilt a desired package in order to remove it from the module. The customer grasps the bottom package in the stack of packages in the module, lifts slightly upward to remove the bottom article, and then the other articles will fall down into place in a stack in the module. The multiple modules provide variations of the products such as different colors or formulations of the product to be displayed in a like manner. The display is simply affixed to a shelf in one embodiment with a pair of clamp mechanisms, so that the display may be easily relocated.

The cross sectional shape of the modules, and the height of the modules can be selected based on the dimensions of a desired soap article. In one embodiment, a generally octagonal shape of a wire frame is used where the front facet of the octagon is open. This embodiment provides an attractive display, and permits the customer to see the front of the soap article.

In other embodiments, the module may be constructed from a closed wire frame. Other cross sectional shapes, including oval, circular, rectangular, and polygonal may be

used. Other materials of construction may be used including metal, plastics, wood, or combinations of materials.

In one embodiment, a single module is provided. In other embodiments, two to six modules are provided in a vertically-arranged display.

Variations and equivalent arrangements of the invention will be obvious to those skilled in the art and are to be considered to be within the scope and spirit of the invention as set forth in the claims.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a front perspective view of a four module rack embodiment.

FIG. 2. is a side perspective view of the embodiment of FIG. 1.

FIG. 3 is a top view of the embodiment of FIG. 1.

FIG. 4 is an exploded view of a module of the embodiment of FIG. 1.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENT – Four module wire rack vertical display

In this embodiment a wire rack forms a vertical display with multiple display modules. In this case four modules are provided, and each module is designed to contain six to eight packaged soap articles such that the bottom article maybe removed from a stack of articles in a module. The wire may be painted or coated, such as with a decorative color.

Referring now to FIGs. 1 to 4, the display rack **10** includes a rear support member **15**, which supports display modules **100**, **200**, **300**, and **400**. Each module includes a

plurality of vertical supports shown here as **34, 32, 56, 58, 22,** and **23,** and a plurality of radial supports shown here as **52** and **54** such that the vertical supports are supported by the radial supports in a spaced apart manner. In this embodiment, the general cross-sectional shape of the rack housing is octagonal and the front **40** has an opening **42** rather than being closed. The opening **42** is smaller than the width soap article so that the soap article will be contained within the housing. The opening is generally the shape and position of the front facet of an octagonal cross section module.

Each module includes a slot at the bottom of the module. The slots include a slot opening **45** and a lip **46.** The slot opening is sized so that a soap article may be tilted slightly so that the leading bottom edge of the container is raised over the lip. The article may then be removed from the slot while the other containers in the module remain confined within the wire frame of the module.

In this example, each module is approximately 9.6 inches high, 4.25 inches wide, and 4.25 inches deep. Soap is contained in plastic clam shell containers **200.** In one embodiment, each clam shell container is approximately 1 ¼ inch tall.

Referring now to FIG. 4, which is an exploded perspective view of one example of construction of a module, the elements may be seen. In this embodiment a stiff wire construction is used for the modules and the supports. The modules **100, 200, 300** and **400** are supported from a pair of stiff vertical wire supports **12** and **14** which run the length of the device. In this example the vertical wire supports are spaced about 1.00 inches apart. Each module includes a L-shaped bracket **21** which provides two rear elements **22** and **23,** portion of a bottom element **24,** and a lip **46.** Each module includes a substantially circumferential frame **50,** which is a bent wire that includes a top portion **52,**

a bottom portion **54** and provides two front portions **56** and **58**. Additionally, in this embodiment, there is a first side element **32** and a second side element **34** that extend from the top of the frame to the bottom of the frame to the bottom support element. This embodiment further comprises a bottom frame **48**. It is not necessary for the circumferential frame to completely enclose the front. In this embodiment, an attractive front opening is provided so that the front of the soap articles may be visible without obstruction. In this example, the lip has a height of about 0.63 inches so that there is a gap of about 1.69 inches between the top of the lip and the bottom of the module frame. The lip preferably protrudes about 0.25 inches beyond the frame.

The device is preferably attached to the store display shelf with a bracket **60** and c-clamp mechanism **70** with a screw **71** and a nut **72**. The bracket **60** is preferably attached to the support wires **12** and **14**. In this embodiment, each bracket is also attached to the module rear wires **22** and **23**. A c-clamp **70** is bolted to the bracket such that the c-clamp may be tightened underneath a shelf in order to hold the device in place relative to the shelf. Preferably there are at least two of these brackets, one being located near the top of the device and the other being located near the bottom of the device to stabilize the device relative to the shelves.

The shape of the modules is not limited to the general octagonal shape as described above. The shape may be generally circular, rectangular, or other polygonal shapes as appropriate for the containers to be displayed.

In this embodiment, the side elements **32** and **34** are bent upward in a general J shape in order to minimize the possibility of injury from scraping a hand as soap articles are placed in a module below the element.

A first set of soap articles is placed in the lowermost fourth module **400**, one article at a time, by placing a package **401** in the opening **420** between the fourth module **400** and the third module **300** and gently lowering the package into place to that it will rest on the bottom surface **448** of the fourth module. This process may be continued until the fourth module is substantially full. The process is repeated for the same soap article or for a different soap article for the third module **300**, then repeated for the second module **200**, and repeated for the top module **100**. In practice, the soap article is removed by tilting the front edge of the soap article over the lip and then pulling the tilted article from the stack. The soap articles that are stacked above the desired article are retained within the module by the circumferential frame. Now the lower lip restricts the soap article from being inadvertently moved or dislodged from the module so that the deliberate tilting and removal action is required.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENT – Five module wire rack vertical display

In this embodiment, five modules are arranged in a vertical display. The modules and support may be made from wire, wood, plastic, or a combination of materials. The crosss sectional shape may be circular, oval, rectangular, or polygonal. The front of each module may be enclosed by the module frame or partially open.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENT – Six module wire rack vertical display

In this embodiment, six modules are arranged in a vertical display. The modules and support may be made from wire, wood, plastic, or a combination of materials. The crosss sectional shape may be circular, oval, rectangular, or polygonal. The front of each module may be enclosed by the module frame or partially open.

Similar embodiments may include one to three modules in a vertical display where the total display height may be in the range of 12 to 60 inches.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENT – Combinations of modules

In this embodiment, the modules of different heights or shapes may be used. For instance, in a three module embodiment, the top module may be taller that the lower modules.

In other embodiments, a first display module has a different size or shape from a second display module.